

Theories of personality: overview and analysis



- Captain TJ McCorriston

1. The term personality is very difficult to define and has been the focus of much debate since the beginnings of psychology. Two major ways to study personality were described by Gordon Allport in 1937; idiographic and nomothetic classes. Idiographic psychology focuses on each detail of a person's unique personality while nomothetic psychology attempts to describe general traits that can be applied to groups of people. This theory is the basis of personality studies that have been developed since that time.

Due to the complexity of each individual's personality we are only at the initial stages of understanding what makes a person who they are.

The current major theories include; behaviourist, trait perspective, evolutionary, humanistic, psychodynamic, biological and social learning.

Modern researchers tend to take a wide-ranging approach to these theories and normally do not identify themselves explicitly with one or another. Today there is substantial emphasis on personality testing as an applied science; there are many personality tests available online. However, of all the sciences, the study of human personality is one of the most contested by theorists. Some of these contested points include; uniqueness vs universality, active vs reactive and heredity vs environment. I find the heredity vs environment to be the most intriguing where it is argued that genetics trumps environment/experiences or vice versa. It can also be argued that each person's unique traits can be similar to others and therefore will fall into a more universal group. The other point I focused on was whether an individual actively pursues goals through initiative or must be stimulated by outside forces.

Taking all that I have learned through study into consideration along with my personal experiences with people across the globe I have defined personality as such: Personality as attributed to an individual is what they show to the world through conscious and unconscious responses to stimuli driven by genetic, environmental, and emotional influences combined with experiences. Personality with regards to a group, culture or nation is the traits exhibited by the majority of the people which determine response to any given stimuli in very general terms.

I found all the theories studied in this course regarding personality to have valid points; however I could not determine a definitive model. I have found through experience that personalities change over time. As an individual experiences his or her world it has a profound effect on them, the way they respond to these changes is directly tied to their genetic background and previous experiences. The response an individual makes is also tied to the current emotional state that individual is in; a certain personality may have a different response to the same stimuli due to emotional state. A macro view of traits may be useful in determining how a group might respond to general stimuli, especially within cultures and nations. The study of personality is very complex and much more data must be compiled before we even approach a working model that will accurately describe it.

2. General Features : Online Personality Tests

Test 1

Title : International Personality Item PoolRepresentation of the NEO PI-R™

Short Form

<https://assignbuster.com/theories-of-personality-overview-and-analysis/>

Author : Dr. John A. Johnson, Professor of Psychology, Penn State University, j5j@psu. edu.

Age Range : 41 to 60 years of age in Canada.

Time required : 10-20 Minutes

Description of the Test : This test attempts to measure the level an individual scores against the five broad personality domains of the Five-Factor Model; extraversion vs introversion, agreeableness vs antagonism, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness. Each domain is subdivided into six subdomains to allow for a more accurate description of the test takers personality. The average is measured against 20, 000 others who have taken this test and are archived in the database. The test is intended to work with a broad range of people from all cultures and all age ranges. The test was fairly standard in its construction and no part of it stood out as unusual.

Psychometric Characteristics : The reliability of the test could be somewhat suspect as it was very short and the questions asked had little in the way of supporting questions. One of the ways that outliers are eliminated is to pose the same question several times in different ways. There was not a lot of this technique used in this test allowing the possibility of outliers corrupting the scores. The other noticeable missing control was the reliance on test takers being completely honest when answering the questions. From what the website posted about its baseline data, it is assumed that the data used for assessing the average for each domain is reliable. As long as data from those

that take the test on the web is not incorporated into the baseline the test should be fairly accurate in most but not all cases.

The test was developed from a much broader study that contains 2,413 items which was assembled by Dr. Lewis R. Goldberg and is available at <http://ipip.ori.org>. This study is in the public domain and is designed for Psychology Professionals to easily collaborate in improving the model. Since the data used to measure the scores within the shorter test is derived from Dr. Goldberg's model we can assume it is sound. Therefore the test should be fairly accurate across the board in the broad domains it is measuring. The only issue I could see with this short version was the lack of control over outliers.

Discussion of Items: The first trait assessed is Extraversion and is ranged from full extravert to full introvert. Extraverts enjoy being with people, are full of energy, and often experience positive emotions. Introverts lack the exuberance, energy, and activity levels of extraverts. They tend to be quiet, low-key, deliberate, and disengaged from the social world. These broad domains are broken down into smaller categories for the purpose of scoring; Friendliness, Gregariousness, Assertiveness, Activity Level, Excitement-Seeking, and Cheerfulness. The second trait is Agreeableness which measures the concern with cooperation and social harmony. This domain is broken down into Trust, Morality, Altruism, Cooperation, Modesty, and Sympathy. The third trait is Conscientiousness which concerns the way in which we control, regulate, and direct our impulses. This domain is broken down into; Self-Efficacy, Orderliness, Dutifulness, Achievement-Striving, Self-Discipline, and Cautiousness. The fourth trait is Neuroticism which refers to <https://assignbuster.com/theories-of-personality-overview-and-analysis/>

the tendency to experience negative feelings. This domain is broken down into; Anxiety, Anger, Depression, Self-Consciousness, Immoderation, and Vulnerability. The fifth domain in this Five-Factor Model is Openness to Experience which describes a dimension of cognitive style that distinguishes imaginative, creative people from down-to-earth, conventional people. This domain is broken down into; Imagination, Artistic Interests, Emotionality, Adventurousness, Intellect, and Liberalism.

Summary: The scoring on this test was a mix of subjective and objective questions that were balanced against each other. The strength of this personality test was its accessibility and its ease of completion. Casual interest users tend to maintain interest in shorter testing than in more exhaustive models. The main weakness of this model is the also its strength, because of the short duration of this test there is some question about elimination of outliers. This may skew some of the scores due to the fallibility of the person answering the questions. Because of the very short duration of this test, I would re-evaluate the number of questions to try to balance the elimination of outliers to the time spent on completion.

Test 2

Title: Jung Typology Test

Author/Publisher: HumanMetrics

Age Range: Unspecified

Time required: 5 Minutes

Description of the Test: This test attempts to measure the person's aptitude for specific career fields based on personality criteria. The website claims to use the three criteria theorized by Dr. Carl Jung and added one other criteria theorized by Dr. Isabel Briggs Myers. The testing is complementary to other services the website offers, among them marriage suitability. The test is targeted at an internet user base, predominantly those in the 25-35 year range looking at broadening their careers or settling down with a family. This test is unique among the tests I sampled on the internet in that it only provided yes or no answers to each question.

Psychometric Characteristics: This test is very short with only 72 questions to determine the score; it took me only 4 minutes to complete. When reviewing the questions I noticed that many were subjective in nature, however the answer choice was "yes or no". None of the questions seemed to overlap trait areas and there was no hint of an attempt to control human error. There is no way to validate whether the test measures its claimed areas with reliable data; the website does not disclose what data they are using. This test is principally offered as an amusement or as a hook to drive traffic to the website.

Discussion of Items: HumanMetrics uses Dr. Carl Gustav Jung's three criteria; Extraversion - Introversion, Sensing - Intuition, and Thinking - Feeling. They also use the fourth criteria added by Dr. Isabel Briggs Myers; Judging-Perceiving. There is no mention of sub-domain categories or explanation on how this data is scored to give the result. To obtain a score on this test you must answer 72 yes or no questions, enter your age and gender. This delivers a four letter code and a description of what this code

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means; at the bottom of the description it gives a score percentage in each of the categories making up the code. In my case I rated an INTJ code with scores as follows: Introvert (11%), iNtuitive (38%), Thinking (75%), Judging (56%). The description and explanations were detailed although not very accurate. The scoring mechanism used by this test is definitely objective due to its question construct (absolute answers). This test has a large potential for error due to the objective nature of the answers, short survey and lack of outlier control.

Summary: Its strengths include the appeal it may have to the target audience who are likely looking for one of the other services the website offers. The short length will keep the interest of the viewer and the resulting description page is career focussed and can be applied to other offered areas including marriage calculators. The short length of this test, the objective nature of the answers, the lack of control measures for human error and the unnamed comparison group data used to measure the result, give a low confidence in its accuracy. This online personality test is not a mainstream attempt to create an accurate model to measure an individual's personality. To be taken seriously in the academic circles the model will have to be restructured to include more subjective criteria and a control function to combat human error.

Emotional Intelligence Test

Title: Queendom Emotional Intelligence Test

Author: Ilona Jerabek, PhD

Age Range: Unspecified

Time required: 75- 100 Minutes

Publisher: Queendom. com

Description of the Test: This test attempts to measure the level of “Emotional Intelligence” the individual possesses. This is defined as the ability to differentiate between emotions and sort them appropriately, then use this emotional information in decision making. This test claims to evaluate numerous facets of your emotional intelligence and suggest ways to improve it. The website claims to make use of the mixed model which combines ability and trait theories as proposed by Dr. Daniel Goleman in 1996. This test is available on the website Queendom. com which is predominantly a woman’s self-help site and is intended to be used as a self-help tool.

Psychometric Characteristics: This test was quite complex in its structure, using a mix of techniques to evaluate the individuals answers against similar questions and eliminate most outliers. As long as the individual is honest and gives each question some thought, this test should be fairly accurate in its measurements. This test took some time to complete and I had to think carefully when answering. The content of the questions were relevant and realistic and the answers reflected the approaches different personalities would use. The result I obtained from the test seemed in line with what I perceive to be normal for myself. The website did not disclose the source of its comparison group data and this will detract from its reliability.

Discussion of Items: The behaviours sampled in this test are as follows: The first domain is Emotional Identification which is defined as reading the emotional state of others, empathizing, and effectively recognizing your own emotions. This is scored with subsets; Perception, and Expression, and Emotional Self-awareness, Awareness of Strengths, Comfort with Emotions, and Recognition of Other's Emotions. The second domain is Emotional Facilitation of Thought Limitations and is defined as the ability to use emotions to derive the aspects of a situation that defies logical solutions. This is scored with subsets; Rumination, Problem-Solving, Positive Mindset, Emotional Reflection, and Values Integrity. Third up is Emotional Understanding defined as the capability of weighing and analyzing emotions in order to act appropriately. This is scored with the subsets; Emotional Integration, Conflict Management Knowledge, Empathy, and Social Insight. The fourth domain is Emotional Management defined as the ability to take responsibility for our actions even when emotions are volatile. This is scored with subsets; Impulse Control, Self-Control, Resilience/Hardiness, Coping Skills, Self-Motivation, Striving, Emotional Selectivity, Adaptable Social Skills, and Conflict Resolution Behavior. And finally the fifth domain, Ego Maturity which is defined as a group of traits that comprise emotional maturity in which a person is comfortable with themselves and has a strong sense of self. This is scored with subsets; Assertiveness, Self-esteem, Contentment, Independence, and Flexibility. The questions asked on the test were both subjective and objective and there was significant overlap in the subject matter to control human error. With this in mind I rated this test to be fairly accurate overall with the exception of the non-disclosure of the comparison group.

Summary: The strength of this emotional intelligence test was its complexity; the questions made the reader reflect on the answers and its length allowed for cross pollinating of answers to remove outliers. The weakness of this test is still the human component, how well a person knows themselves and whether or not they answer honestly may skew the outcome. I found the test worthwhile and interesting however to obtain your full results you must make a financial commitment. This is to be expected when considering the self-help website that hosts the test and the cost involved in the development of such a sophisticated model.

Conclusion: Personality testing is not the same as emotional testing although they are similar in construction. Personality is the accumulated genetic, cultural, environmental and emotional experiences that drive us to react in a specific manner to given stimuli. This reaction must be relatively consistent over time for the trait to be applied to the individual. Emotion is the reaction of the individual to a stimulus over a short period of time, depending on the subject this can fluctuate widely conditional to the emotional state of the individual. Personality testing touches on a wide variety of different scenarios most of which are emotion neutral, emotional testing focusses on specific reactions to emotional situations and how the individual handles them.

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